



I-5 – SR 161/SR 18 Triangle Improvements

Summary of Comments March 2005 Open House

Submitted to:
Washington State Department of Transportation

Submitted by:
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Open House

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) held a public open house to provide information about and receive public comments on the preferred alternative for the I-5 – SR 161/SR 18 Triangle Improvements Project. The open house was held on Wednesday March 31, 2005 at:

Todd Beamer High School Library
35999 16th Avenue S.
Federal Way, WA 98003

The public open house was held from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., and was attended by 35 members of the public. The open house consisted of staffed display areas and comment tables. Participants were able to talk one-on-one with project staff, view displays of the alternative and the project area, and record their comments on provided comment forms. Participants were informed that they could submit written comments at the meeting or submit written comments via email, mail, or fax.

Notification Process

Legal notification of the open house included a legal notice in the Seattle Times, published on 22 and 29 2005. Additional outreach to ensure interested and affected citizens were aware of the open house included:

- Project newsletters, mailed to approximately 3,600 addresses within the study area and to 39 representatives of federal, state, regional, and local agencies and appropriate Tribes
- Project bulletins, posted in approximately 75 public locations within the study area in English, Russian, Korean, and Spanish
- The project website, with information about the public open house and other ways to provide scoping comments
- Display advertisements in the Seattle Times, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Tacoma News Tribune, Federal Way Mirror, El Mundo (Spanish), and the Korean Post (Korean)
- E-mail notification to elected officials from Federal Way, Milton, King County, Pierce County, and the Washington State Legislature

The notification process indicated that the public was being asked to give their comments on the preferred alternative and to identify issues they believe should be evaluated in the environmental review process. Comments received will be used to refine the alternative and to define the scope of the environmental analysis.

Comment Summary

A total of six comment forms were received at the public open house. A number of attendees also made oral comments to project staff. Three comment forms were received in the mail after the open house.

In summary, the majority of commenters expressed support for the preferred alternative because it minimizes the need to buy private property and addresses the major congestion problems in the area. The primary concern about the preferred alternative was its potential for noise impacts. Comments on noise focused on the potential impacts to Bonsai Collection and Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden. These comments indicated that increased noise would have negative impacts on visitor numbers and experiences. Specific suggestions to address noise concerns included adding noise walls to flyovers, earthen berms to at-grade roadways, and preserving trees in the area. Additional concerns included:

- Impacts to the SR 161 and 356th Street intersection – adding another leg to it and using a roundabout
- Impacts to businesses and property owners – to their development and sales plans (some indicated a willingness to sell their property).

Comment Forms

The comment forms asked specific questions to help focus public input on the preferred alternative. This section provides a summary of all responses submitted via comment forms at the public open house and afterwards.

What do you think of the preferred alternative? Are there refinements that will improve the alternative?

- Access will be improved and the on-off weaving will be reduced
- It appears that southbound traffic on Weyerhaeuser Way S. will improve
- It will be an improvement if this alternative reduces traffic on 28th Ave. S, with easier access to Wild Waves
- Further refinements, such as berms or preserving all trees on the south and southeast sides of the gardens, are preferred
- The W4 alternative is much better than previous alternatives
- The preferred alternative will add to the already bad congestion problems on Highway 161
- The preferred alternative appears to be an adequate solution to the problem intersection in the area
- Explore options for sound barriers, such as walls or earthen berms
- Ban compression brakes, use sound barrier panels on above-grade ramps, and use earthen berms at grade level
- Add noise walls, or some other method of noise control, such as berms or trees
- The preferred alternative seems better than earlier alternatives because it has less encroachment on the Bonsai Collection and Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden

- The preferred alternative is a great design to address the Federal Way “mess”
- The alternate on/off points (376th and 256th, etc.) will benefit Edgwood and Milton
- Put Highway 18 in a tunnel
- Ideally, trucks would enter onto the freeway other than from a dead stop at 16th and 348th.

What potential impacts should be studied during environmental review?

- Try to protect Hylebos wetlands from impacts, as part of this waterway is getting salmon back
- Flyovers must have sound barriers to address negative noise impacts to the Bonsai Collection and Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden
- The Bonsai Collection and Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden already experience a great deal of traffic noise; it would be great if this project could reduce noise and improve quality of life through improved traffic conditions and improved experiences at these gardens
- Noise is a significant impact that should be carefully reviewed, particularly impacts to the adjacent Bonsai Collection and Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden. Their natural qualities need to be preserved so visitors can experience nature. Both gardens are valuable to the larger community
- Noise from increased use
- Noise is a very high concern to the Weyerhaeuser Company and the City of Federal Way, as the Bonsai Collection and Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden are the principal year-round tourist attractions in the area
- To address noise concerns, WSDOT should:
 - Include noise barriers on SR 18 flyovers
 - Include earthen berms on grade-level on/off ramps on SR 18 and I-5
 - Work with the city to erect signs on SR 18 and I-5 that prohibit the use of compression brakes
- Preserve the trees around the Bonsai Collection and Rhododendron Species Foundation Gardens.

How often do you use I-5, SR 18 and SR161?

Of the 7 individuals who responded to this question four indicated that they used the area on a daily basis. Other respondents said that they used the area regularly, but not on a daily basis.

What do you do to avoid the area's congestion?

Respondents indicated that taking local streets is the primary way they avoid the area's congestion. A few indicated that they travel at different times of the day or grouped their activities to travel in the area less often.